

OBITUARY.

The Council regret that they have to record the loss by death of the following Fellows and Associates during the past year:—

Fellows:—J. S. Ancona.

Thomas Buckney.

Lord Farnham.

James Gill.

J. E. Keeler.

E. J. Lowe.

John McLandsborough.

Horace Pearce.

W. T. Radford.

Sir Josiah Rees.

T. G. Rylands.

C. Piazzi Smyth.

J. H. Young.

Associates:—J. E. Keeler.

Robert Luther.

JOSEPH SUPINO ANCONA, the eldest son of the late Leon Ancona, was born in London on the 4th of September 1819; and died at his residence, Fernleigh, South Norwood, on the 16th of July 1900, in his 81st year, after long suffering from angina pectoris. His early wish was to take Holy Orders and he went to Cambridge with that intention; but his father's loss of fortune about that time made this course impossible and he became an architect and surveyor. He took a keen interest in astronomy, and became a Fellow of this Society on the 10th of March, 1854; but he never published any work on the subject. He married young; his wife died in 1881. They had no family.

THOMAS BUCKNEY was born at Camberwell, London, on the 1st of December 1838. He was connected nearly all his life with the business of Messrs. E. Dent & Co., clock and watch-makers of London, becoming superintendent of the manufacturing department in 1864 and a partner in 1872. A few months later, on the death of his father, he became senior acting partner, and senior partner in 1881. His knowledge of his business was sound and thorough, and extended from watches to the largest turret-clocks. He was the designer of electric contacts for

marine chronometers, and one of his latest and best works was the great clock recently erected at Gloucester Cathedral. He took a special pride in the going of "Big Ben" at the Houses of Parliament, Westminster, which was made by his firm, and in 1887 drew the attention of the Society to the fact that the clock had gone from March 29 to July 6 without any alteration, remaining within 2 sec. of true Greenwich time. From the purely astronomical point of view perhaps his best work was the construction of the Sidereal Standard Clock at Greenwich, in 1871. The clock was to have Airy's escapement (described in Vol. III. of the *Trans. Camb. Phil. Soc.*), and the more delicate parts of this escapement Mr. Buckney made with his own hands. But Airy had ordered a heavy mercurial pendulum, and Mr. Buckney convinced himself from experiments made at the time that a zinc and steel pendulum was preferable, as it would respond to changes of temperature much more readily. The mercury compensation had a sluggish action "due to the more slender parts of the pendulum (the rods and spring) taking up the new temperature very quickly, whilst the bobs, being much more bulky, required a much longer time to do this. . . . Considering the matter, it occurred to me that if we were to eliminate from the compensative action of the zinc and steel pendulums the expansion of the bob, which we could easily do by suspending it at its centre of gravity, and rely entirely on the zinc and steel tubes and rod, matters would be very much improved, as then the compensation would be effected by parts having pretty much the same bulk, and therefore likely to act simultaneously. And so it turned out. . . . In the end I determined to lay the matter before Sir George Airy, and request his sanction to the removal of the mercurial pendulum from the Greenwich clock, and the substitution in its place of a zinc and steel pendulum on the new principle." (*Monthly Notices, R.A.S.*, xlv., pp. 464-65). That the clock has been a success a glance at any of the subsequent Greenwich volumes will show. In 1880 Mr. Buckney read a paper to this Society suggesting a method of enclosing a clock in an air-tight case, winding it electrically by currents set up by itself. He was a constant attendant at the meetings of the Society (of which he was elected Fellow in May 1880) until recent years. Those who attend the meetings have become accustomed to glance at their watches when the bell rings, knowing that the signal represents accurate Greenwich time. They are indebted for the introduction of this signal to the kindness of Mr. Buckney, who arranged that hourly signals should be sent from Messrs. Dent's to the Society's rooms free of charge; the Society only repaying the rental of the wire charged by the Post Office. His death took place at his residence in London after a short illness on the 1st of February 1900, at the age of sixty-one.

SOMERSET HENRY MAXWELL, 10th Baron FARNHAM, representative Peer of Ireland, J.P., D.L. county Cavan, Lieutenant

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